

## Early Chinese Poetics in the Light of Recently Excavated Manuscripts

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### Preliminary considerations<sup>1</sup>

Until quite recently, our only access to the early poetic canon of the *Odes* (*Shi* 詩) was through the Chinese literary tradition that for more than two millennia has preserved the ancient songs. Ever since late Eastern Han times, the primary text has been that of the Mao 毛 recension in the version of Zheng Xuan's 鄭玄 (127–200) *Mao Shi zhuanjian* 毛詩傳箋. Fragments of other versions and interpretations are preserved as quotations in a number of early texts; Qing scholars like Chen Qiacong 陳喬縱 (1809–1869) and Wang Xianqian 王先謙 (1842–1918) have assigned these textual slivers individually to one of the three teaching traditions (*san jia* 三家) of the *Odes* that dominated their reception throughout Western and early Eastern Han times before being eclipsed by the Mao-Zheng exegetical line.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The present study builds upon Kern *forthcoming (a)*. Where necessary and appropriate, I briefly draw upon the earlier piece or use some of its wording.

<sup>2</sup> The *san jia Shi* include the *Han Shi* 韓詩, *Qi Shi* 齊詩, and *Lu Shi* 魯詩 (Lin Yaolin 1996; Hightower 1948, 1952). Of the nearly thirty titles of Han exegetical works associated with one of these three or with the Mao recension, only the Mao commentary and Han Ying's 韓嬰 (fl. ca. 150 BCE) *Han Shi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳 have survived, while all works of the *Qi* and *Lu* traditions are lost. In an act of literary archaeology, Mark Laurent Asselin (Asselin 1997) has nevertheless been able to reconstruct what seems to have been the Lu reading for “Guan ju” during Han times. The authoritative collection of textual variants in, and readings from, the *san jia* traditions is Wang Xian-

However, the dramatic surge in Chinese archaeology over the past three decades has not only helped to improve our understanding of early Chinese culture in ways unimaginable to earlier generations; it also allows us to reappraise some major issues surrounding the early history of *Odes* transmission and interpretation.

Beginning with the spectacular Mawangdui 馬王堆 (Changsha 長沙, Hunan; tomb sealed 168 BCE) finds from 1973, four out of more than 130 Warring States, Qin, and Han archaeological sites (Giele 2001) with ancient manuscripts contain fragments of the *Odes*. Quotations from individual songs are included in the “Wuxing” 五行 silk manuscript from Mawangdui tomb no. 3 and in the “Wuxing” and “Ziyi” 緇衣 bamboo manuscripts from Guodian 郭店 (Jingmen 荊門, Hubei; tomb sealed probably ca. 300 BCE) tomb no. 1, while the badly damaged *Odes* fragments from Shuanggudui 雙古堆 (Fuyang 阜陽, Anhui; tomb sealed 165 BCE) actually represent an—perhaps already originally—incomplete bamboo copy of the *Odes* anthology. In addition, another large corpus of probably late 4th century BCE bamboo slips from the old southern state of Chu 楚 has surfaced. These more than twelve hundred slips, carrying about thirty-five thousand characters, were probably looted from a tomb. Offered in several portions between spring and fall of 1994 on the Hong Kong antique market, they were purchased there by the Shanghai Museum. In late 2001, the museum published the first volume on this find, including the reproduction, transcription, and study of three fragmentary manuscripts (Ma Chengyuan 2001). Among these three manuscripts is another version of the “Ziyi” as well as a text that the modern editors have labelled “Kongzi shilun” 孔子詩論 (“Confucius’ discussion of the *Odes*”). The latter appears to consist of parts from altogether twenty-nine bamboo slips and bears slightly over one thousand characters. Although clearly fragmentary, this text is of distinct significance, as it constitutes our earliest manuscript evidence not only for the circulation of the *Odes* but also for their evaluation and discussion.<sup>3</sup>

qian 1987 which is based on the work of earlier scholars, especially on Chen Qiacong 1988.

<sup>3</sup> This text was published only after the Prague conference, and after I had already finished the revisions of the present study. After briefly perusing the publication, I had just enough time to include a few remarks on it here. I am now in the process of studying the text in full detail, the results of which will be published on a different occasion.

While manuscripts pertinent to ancient Chinese poetry and poetics remain so scarce, every single one of them grants us new glimpses into the early history of the *Odes*. The fact that even the very limited materials at hand allow us to ask new and interesting questions also means that some of our preliminary conclusions today might be overturned tomorrow by the very next move of a peasant’s spade or a construction worker’s excavator somewhere in China, most likely in the old southern territory of Chu. The appearance of new manuscripts seems only a question of time. Unlike scholars of past generations, we now realize how thin the ice is on which we have been walking; what looks safe today might crumble tomorrow. The present study is therefore but an attempt to take a first inventory: what do recently excavated manuscripts tell us about the production, transmission, reception, quotation, and interpretation of early Chinese poetry? How does the evidence from the manuscripts tally with our views of these issues that have been formed through the received tradition of the *Odes*? Are there genuinely new perspectives emerging on the early history of the *Odes*, involving both the transmission and the exegesis of this poetry, and relating one to the other? Can we reach behind the historical and moralistic exegesis by Mao and Zheng Xuan that—canonized in Kong Yingda’s 孔穎達 (574–648) *Wujing zhengyi* 五經正義—until Song times dominated the understanding of the *Odes* and that in large parts, especially in its glosses of individual words, has even survived the re-interpretations of scholars like Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072), Su Che 蘇轍 (1039–1112), Zheng Qiao 鄭樵 (1036–1162) and Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), not to mention the efforts of eminent Qing philologists like Yao Jiheng 姚際恆 (b. 1647), Ma Ruichen 馬瑞辰 (1782–1835), Chen Huan 陳奐 (1786–1863), Fang Yurun 方玉潤 (1811–1883), or Wang Xianqian? At the same time, will the excavated manuscripts allow us to transcend certain commonplace denunciations of the Mao-Zheng exegesis by those modern *Odes* readers who simply replace the ancient ideology by a perhaps even less plausible modern one that all too often is guided by little more than what these interpreters arbitrarily perceive as their own “common sense,” e.g., when claiming that the political readings of the Mao-Zheng tradition are forced upon what originally were innocent folk songs?<sup>4</sup> Can we begin to think in

<sup>4</sup> There is a broad East-West scholarly coalition, moved by very divergent interests and convictions that has reversed *Odes* scholarship since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century; see Goldin 2001.

more specific terms about the transition from an earlier, supposedly more “original,” understanding of the *Odes* to that of the Han exegetes?

In methodological terms, I believe the first principle to be: dealing with manuscripts that have transmitted counterparts (cf. Boltz 1997)—as is the case with the *Odes* fragments—should be a disinterested affair beyond certain cultural ideologies. Neither the “doubting antiquity” (*yi gu* 疑古) conviction of the early, nor the “trusting antiquity” (*xin gu* 信古) creed of the late 20th century will help us to register exactly how the new evidence accords with, and differs from, the received textual record, and what these specific accordances and differences entail with respect to more general issues. To address the very complex matters of early Chinese textuality, our research will need to transcend both sentiments (and whatever their ultimate motives may be).<sup>5</sup> To my mind, the *Odes* fragments of late Warring States and early imperial manuscripts perfectly illustrate this complexity, as they inspire two apparently contradictory conclusions: a sound confidence in the authenticity of the received anthology and disturbing doubts about our understanding of its early history, that is, its reception, transmission, and interpretation. Even before looking at the newly excavated texts proper, the four archaeological finds pertinent to early Chinese poetry and poetics lend themselves to some preliminary observations.

First of all, despite their enormous and unique prestige attested in a long string of important pre-imperial and early imperial texts, the *Odes* were probably not a standard burial item. Moreover, all pre-imperial and early imperial manuscript evidence for the *Odes* comes from tombs in the south, that is, from localities in the old state of Chu. While the tombs of Guodian, Mawangdui, and Shuanggudui have yielded a substantial number of other canonical texts associated with the early Ru 儒 tradition, only three other sites of late Western/early Eastern Han times have been found containing similar texts (Giele 2001: # 91, 98, 120): tomb

<sup>5</sup> It is no secret that the field of early Chinese textual studies continues to lag far behind that of the Western classics. Central issues of textuality that have been debated for two centuries with respect to early Greek poetry are barely beginning to surface in our own field. It is perhaps impossible to expect works like Rosalind Thomas's *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece* (Thomas 1995) or Gregory Nagy's *Poetry as Performance: Homer and Beyond* (Nagy 1996), which reflect the scholarly efforts of generations of cumulative scholarship, to appear any time soon in early Chinese studies.

no. 40 from Bajiaolang 八角廊 (Dingxian 定縣, Hebei) with a version of the *Lunyu* 論語 (Hebei sheng wenwu yanjiusuo Dingzhou Han mu zhujian zhengli xiaozu 1997), fragments from *Xunzi* 荀子, and a number of Han texts on bamboo slips (Li and He 1990: 44-50); tomb no. 6 from Mozuizi 磨嘴子 (Wuwei 武威, Gansu) with texts from several *Yili* 儀禮 chapters on wooden and bamboo slips (Gansu sheng bowuguan 1964); and ruins of houses and watchtowers at Lop Nor 羅布泊 (Ruoqiang xian 若羌縣, Xinjiang) with a *Lunyu* fragment of only ten characters on one wooden slip (Huang Lie 1989: 394-95, 408 [slip 59]). Dating significantly later than the tombs of Guodian, Mawangdui, and Shuanggudui and most likely also the unknown site that contained the Shanghai Museum slips, these locations are all in the north, with Mozuizi and Wuwei even on the north-western periphery of the by then unified Han empire, far away from the cultural centers of both Han and pre-imperial China.

I wonder whether the near-complete—the single exception is Bajiaolang—absence of manuscript evidence for the traditional canon in the old north-eastern centers of Ru learning can be ascribed entirely to accidental circumstances of natural decay and preservation. After all, there are other (administrative, military, etc.) manuscripts from these regions; if the traditional canon had been put routinely into the tombs of the nobility or other men of classical learning, we perhaps would by now have seen traces of this practice. While the silence from north-eastern tombs might be surprising enough, the early presence of traditional texts in the south raises the perhaps more interesting questions, in particular with respect to the *Odes*, if we consider the cultural geography represented in the anthology itself: with the *ya* 雅 and *song* 頌 parts being associated with the (northern) royal court, almost all of the fifteen sections of the *guo feng* 國風 are named after northern states stretching across a relatively narrow corridor from Shandong to Shaanxi. The *Odes* of the southernmost of them, Chen 陳 (swallowed by Chu in 479 BCE), were considered those of a perishing state by Prince Ji Zha 季札 of Wu 吳 during his famous visit to Lu 魯 in 544 BCE,<sup>6</sup> and the state enjoyed a

<sup>6</sup> The account on the full traditional program of music and dance witnessed by the prince is given under the 29th year of Duke Xiang 襄 (Yang Bojun 1993: 1161-65). The performance implies that the prince from the south had to travel to Lu in order to see and hear the old Zhou music.

poor reputation as at best semi-barbarian (or semi-civilized) even in the late retrospective from Eastern Han times.<sup>7</sup>

Instead of entering the philosophical interpretations of the southern tomb texts and relating them to traditional Ru masters like Mencius 孟子, Xunzi 荀子, or the somewhat elusive Zisizi 子思子<sup>8</sup>—figures that seem to have had no particular connection to the south—the present study is content with raising some more pedestrian questions: in which form do we imagine southern nobles<sup>9</sup> participating in the philosophical discourses of late Warring States times? How and where did they get their texts? Why did they matter to them? And what does the existence of the canonical texts in late 4th century BCE Chu suggest about the overall coherence of the philosophical and literary oikumene? To begin with the last point, the manuscript finds corroborate what scholars like Peters (1983), Waters (1985), von Falkenhausen (1991), and others have suggested from literary, archaeological, historical, and art historical perspectives, namely, that despite its recognizable characteristics in form and style of representation (Cook and Major 1999), Warring States Chu culture was by no means sharply separated from, and certainly not alien to, its contemporaneous counterpart in the north. With respect to poetry, the often observed phonological coherence between the rhymes of the *Odes* and the early layers of the *Chuci* 楚辭 anthology (Karlgren 1936: 169; Walker 1982), which actually extends to a range of early imperial texts,<sup>10</sup> may now be

<sup>7</sup> See *Hanshu* 漢書 28B.1653 and 1665–66 where both Chen and Chu are disparaged for their excessive religious practices.

<sup>8</sup> Since the publication of the Guodian manuscripts in 1998, hundreds of Chinese as well as a number of Japanese and Western studies have appeared discussing how the texts fit into Warring States philosophical discourse. While this certainly is a central question, the almost total scholarly concentration on it tends to perpetuate the standard “Great Tradition” idea, orients itself along what we already “know,” and may miss a range of fresh and challenging questions that can be gained from the new archaeological evidence.

<sup>9</sup> While the identity of the Guodian tomb occupant is unclear, the Mawangdui tomb belongs to the family of Li Cang 李蒼 (d. 185 BCE), Marquis of Dai 韋 and Chancellor of the principedom of Changsha; the Shuanggudui tomb belongs to Xiahou Zao 夏侯昭 (d. 165 BCE), the Marquis of Ruyin 汝陰. Nothing suggests the Shanghai Museum slips to be associated with a fundamentally different background.

<sup>10</sup> These would include early Western Han texts like the “Anshi fangzhong ge” 安世房中歌, the *Huainanzi* 淮南子, the middle layers of the *Chuci* anthology, and a number of shorter songs related

reconsidered in the light of the *Odes* quotations in contemporaneous Chu tomb manuscripts. As will be demonstrated in some detail below, the excavated philosophical texts and their embedded poetic quotations are situated squarely in Warring States mainstream thought and literary practice.

### The distribution and appearance of *Odes* quotations in the Guodian, Mawangdui, and Shanghai Museum manuscripts

Turning to the actual *Odes* quotations in excavated texts, a picture of remarkable coherence with the transmitted anthology becomes visible. The distribution of *Odes* quotations in the Guodian and Mawangdui “Wuxing,” Guodian and Shanghai Museum “Ziyi,” and Shanghai Museum “Kongzi shilun” manuscripts can be tabulated as follows (in brackets are the numbers of the songs in the received Mao anthology):<sup>11</sup>

#### *Odes* quotations in the Guodian, Mawangdui, and Shanghai Museum manuscripts

	Guodian 郭店 and Shanghai Museum 上海博物館 “Ziyi” <緇衣>	Guodian 郭店 “Wuxing” <五行>	Mawangdui 馬王堆 “Wuxing” <五行>	Shanghai Museum 上海博物館 “Kongzi shilun” <孔子詩論>
Zhou nan 周南	Guan ju 關雎 (# 1)		Guan ju 關雎 (# 1)	
	Ge tan 葛覃 (# 2)			

to members of the Han imperial house. They all are in one way or another related to Chu music or literary/philosophical culture yet at the same time rhyme in close coherence with the *Odes* (Kern 1997: 111–14, 159–73; Kern 2000a: 126–28).

<sup>11</sup> For the Guodian materials, I base myself on Jingmen shi bowuguan 1998; for the Shanghai Museum texts, I follow Ma Chengyuan 2001; for the Mawangdui “Wuxing” manuscripts, I use the edition by Ikeda 1993. A good English study and translation of the Guodian “Wuxing” manuscript is provided by Cook 2000. Pang Pu 2000: 1–87 gives annotated transcriptions of both the Mawangdui and the Guodian “Wuxing” manuscripts and compares the two versions. The most detailed account of both texts, compared to each other, may be found in Liu Xinfang 2000.

Shao nan 召南		Cao chong 草蟲 (# 14)	Cao chong 草蟲 (# 14)	
Guo feng 國風		Yan yan 燕燕 (# 28)	Yan yan 燕燕 (# 28); twice	
				Yi jie 猗嗟 (# 106)
				Yuan qiu 宛丘 (# 136)
	Shi jiu 鶉鳩 (# 152); twice	Shi jiu 鶉鳩 (# 152)	Shi jiu 鶉鳩 (# 152)	Shi jiu 鶉鳩 (# 152)
Xiao ya 小雅	Lu ming 鹿鳴 (# 161)			
	Ju gong 車攻 (# 179)			
	Jie nan shan 節南 山 (# 191); twice			
	Zheng yue 正月 (# 192)			
	Xiao min 小旻 (# 195)			
	Qiao yan 巧言 (# 198)			
	Xiao ming 小明 (# 207)			
	Du ren shi 都人士 (# 225)			
Da ya 大雅	Wen wang 文王 (# 235)	Wen wang 文王 (# 235)	Wen wang 文王 (# 235); three times	Wen wang 文王 (# 235)
		Da ming 大明 (# 236); twice	Da ming 大明 (# 236); four times	Da ming 大明 (# 236)
				Huang yi 皇矣 (# 241)
	Xia wu 下武 (# 243)			

	Ji zui 既醉 (# 247)			
	Ban 板 (# 254)			
	Yi 抑 (# 256); four times			
Zhou song 周頌				Qing miao 清廟 (# 266); twice
				Lie wen 烈文 (# 269)
				Hao tian you cheng ming 昊天有成命 (# 271)
Shang song 商頌		Chang fa 長發 (# 304)	Chang fa 長發 (# 304); twice	
	one "lost ode" (yi shi 逸詩)			

Out of twenty-seven recognizable *Odes* in altogether fifty-three quotations,<sup>12</sup> twenty-six can be found in the received anthology. Moreover, in their wording, though not in their orthography, all passages but one<sup>13</sup> are highly consistent with the Mao version. While in the two "Wuxing" manuscripts, quotations from the *guo feng* (including the two *nan* 南) sections are in a balance with those of the *ya* and *song* hymns, the Guodian "Ziyi" manuscript as well as its counterpart in the Shanghai Museum concentrate heavily on texts from the *xiao ya* and *da ya*.<sup>14</sup> All quotations from the Guodian "Wuxing" manuscript are included in the Mawangdui version of the same text. On the other hand, the Mawangdui manuscript in addition quotes "Guan ju," expands several of the Guodian *Odes* quotations signi-

<sup>12</sup> I count the Guodian and Shanghai Museum quotations as one, as this is clearly the same text.

<sup>13</sup> The exception is one completely different line in "Du ren shi" in the Guodian "Ziyi" manuscript.

<sup>14</sup> The Shanghai Museum "Ziyi" manuscript matches the one from Guodian in length, internal order, and contents, including all *Odes* quotations. In a few cases, the quotations in the Shanghai Museum slips are fragmentary, compared to those from Guodian.

ficantly, and repeats a number of them in an additional discussion. In general, the quotations in the Guodian and Shanghai Museum manuscripts are very short, in most cases no longer than a couplet of two tetrasyllabic lines. In the Guodian and Shanghai Museum "Ziyi" texts, we have only one instance ("Jie nan shan") of three lines and two more of four lines ("Yi" and "Zheng yue"); in the Guodian "Wuxing" text, we have merely one of three lines ("Cao chong"). None of the quotations in the Shanghai Museum "Kongzi shilun" exceeds two lines. By contrast, the Mawangdui "Wuxing" manuscript includes individual quotations comprising four, five or six lines of a song.

Of the mere three songs that the Guodian "Ziyi" manuscript quotes from the *nan* 南 and *guo feng* sections (out of a total of 160 songs of these sections in the Mao recension), two also appear in the Mawangdui "Wuxing" manuscript. While transmitted pre-Qin and early imperial texts that quote the *Odes* are usually strongly biased towards the *xiao ya* and *da ya* hymns, "Guan ju" and "Shi jiu"—or at least certain lines from these—may have enjoyed a particular status that raised them above most other *guo feng* pieces. This may not be surprising with respect to "Guan ju" as it is elevated already in *Analects* 3/20 and 8/15;<sup>15</sup> but "Shi jiu" appears in all known manuscripts that quote from the *Odes* (those at Guodian and Mawangdui, as well as the Shanghai Museum "Ziyi"), that include a version of the *Odes* anthology (the one at Shuanggudui), or that discuss individual songs from it (the Shanghai Museum "Kongzi shilun"). In addition, "Shi jiu" is the most frequently quoted *guo feng* song in early transmitted texts of the Ru tradition, e.g., in the *Liji* chapters "Ziyi," "Daxue" 大學, and "Jingjie" 經解, in the *Xunzi* 荀子 chapters "Quan xue" 勸學, "Fu guo" 富國, "Yi bing" 議兵, and "Junzi" 君子, in the *Han Shi waixhuan*, or in the *Xiaojing* 孝經.<sup>16</sup> As the "Shi jiu" quotations are essentially limited to merely three different couplets—only the Mawangdui "Wuxing" manuscript quotes in addition another one—it seems that these lines were seen as general and widely applicable slogans: "A pure man is our lord, his deportment is single-minded" (淑人君子, 其儀一兮), "A pure man is our lord,

<sup>15</sup> According to scholars engaged in stratifying the *Analects* chronologically, both passages belong to layers of the book that would not postdate the Guodian manuscript (Van Zoeren 1991: 30–31; Brooks and Brooks 1998: 84, 127).

<sup>16</sup> For different interpretations of "Shi jiu" in different texts, see O Man-jong 2001: 19–30.

his deportment is not faulty" (淑人君子, 其儀忒), or "His deportment is not faulty, he rectifies these four lands" (其儀不忒, 正是四國) are general enough to fit a variety of contexts.

The favoring of particular *Odes* applies similarly to the *ya* and *song* sections. While in early texts, these are altogether much more broadly represented than the *guo feng*, some hymns appear with particular frequency. For example, only three of the fifteen *ya* and *song* mentioned in the Guodian and Mawangdui texts are not quoted in the *Han Shi waixhuan*, while "Ban" (Mao 254), "Yi" (Mao 256), and "Chang fa" (Mao 304) are three of the four most quoted songs in this work, evoked eleven, twelve, and seventeen times. In addition, "Qiao yan" (Mao 198), "Xiao ming" (Mao 207), and "Wen wang" (Mao 235) are quoted seven, five, and six times there. In sum, the *Odes* selections in the Guodian, Shanghai Museum, and Mawangdui "Ziyi" and "Wuxing" manuscripts are quite representative of the poetic corpus quoted regularly in transmitted early texts—a finding that places these manuscripts into the mainstream tradition while in turn also confirming the authenticity of this tradition. On the other hand, the Shanghai Museum "Kongzi shilun" may constitute a remarkable exception to the distributional patterns of the *Odes* in early texts, both excavated and transmitted. It quotes directly only from the *Zhou song* songs "Qing miao" 清廟 (# 266), "Lie wen" 烈文 (# 269), and "Hao tian you cheng ming" 昊天有成命 (# 271), the *da ya* songs "Huang yi" 皇矣 (# 241), "Da ming," and "Wen wang" as well as the *guo feng* songs "Yuan qiu" 宛丘 (# 136), "Yi jie" 猗嗟 (# 106), and "Shi jiu"; of these, only "Wen wang," "Da ming," and "Huang yi," i.e., the *da ya* pieces, and "Shi jiu" appear in the *Han Shi waixhuan*. At the same time, the "Kongzi shilun" seems to refer, in the cases of a number of *guo feng* pieces even somewhat extensively, to a broad range of *Odes* by their titles: the three *Zhou song* already mentioned, five *da ya* (including the ones mentioned), twenty-two *xiao ya*, twenty-two *guo feng* (including the ones mentioned) and seven otherwise unknown pieces;<sup>17</sup> of these, four *da ya*, thirteen *xiao ya*, but merely four *guo feng* are noted in the *Han Shi waixhuan*. The problem with these numbers is the highly fragmentary nature of the "Kongzi

<sup>17</sup> This follows Ma Chengyuan (2001: 160–61) who gives a convenient survey of the titles as they appear in the manuscript and their—often graphically different—matches in the received anthology. On closer examination of the manuscript, a few of these matches are quite tentative.

shilun;" I suspect that the present text is but a smaller part of what originally must have been a far more extensive work.<sup>18</sup> Yet even if we do not know how many more *ya* pieces may have originally been mentioned in this manuscript, the number of *guo feng* songs that are included here is in itself already exceptional. "Guan ju," "Yan yan," and "Shi jiu" are among them; of the *xiao ya* quoted in the two "Ziyi" manuscripts, "Lu ming," "Jie nan shan," "Xiao min," "Qiao yan," and "Xiao ming" can also be found in the "Kongzi shilun."

The fact that the Mawangdui "Wuxing" silk manuscript includes more and repeated quotations from the *Odes* than its Guodian bamboo counterpart is related to the overall structure of the two versions: as recognized by Pang Pu, Ikeda, and others, the Mawangdui text is—in traditional terms—divided into a *jing* 經/ *shuo* 說 structure known also from other early texts, where a shorter (perhaps earlier) core (*jing*) is elaborated upon in separate (perhaps later) explanatory sections (*shuo*). It is especially in these latter sections that we encounter the most interesting comments on some songs, reflecting an exegetical tradition distinct from those of the four known Western Han recensions. By contrast, the Guodian "Wuxing" manuscript includes only the basic text but not its explanatory sections. Given the high coherence between the two manuscripts from Guodian and Mawangdui, their chronological separation of probably not more than about a century,<sup>19</sup> and their geographical proximity, it seems clear that the former version is directly ancestral to the latter. This suggests one of two possible interpretations:

<sup>18</sup> I draw this conclusion mainly from two observations: first, most bamboo slips do not directly follow one upon the other, regardless of how one arranges them; there always remain obvious gaps in contents. (As a result, the present order of the slips is but a mere conjecture on the side of the Shanghai editors.) Second, large parts of the manuscript are composed in recurrent formulaic structures, where the characterizations of different *Odes* follow the same rhythmic patterns. For a few songs, these patterns are developed in several layers, beginning with a very brief note and expanding from there. In most cases, however, one only finds parts of this pattern. As these parts adhere closely to the corresponding sections in the longer discussion of other songs, I find it improbable to assume that they are complete as such. The remarkable formulaicity rather suggests that certain *Odes* were grouped together and that within such groups, each song was discussed in the same extended way. (This can be demonstrated especially for the discussion of seven *guo feng* on slips 10 to 16.)

<sup>19</sup> The use of the character *bang* 邦 in the Mawangdui manuscript is suggestive of a composition date no later than 195 BCE after which *bang* would have been tabooed as being the late Han founding emperor's (Liu Bang 劉邦, r. as emperor 202–195 BCE) given name.

(a) the Mawangdui version includes a new set of explanations from a particular teaching tradition that developed only after the composition of the Guodian version; or (b) the Guodian version is focused on the core text only, while leaving the already existing explanations aside. If following Jeffrey Riegel in that the Mawangdui 'Wuxingpian' version of early Confucian *Innerlichkeit* clearly owes a conceptual debt to Xunzi' (Riegel 1997: 145), one might be inclined towards alternative (a). However, this would seem to privilege the book *Xunzi* over the Mawangdui manuscript while one might prefer to imagine a more fluid state of affairs, that is, a 4th/3rd century BCE teaching tradition that informs both (and probably others).<sup>20</sup>

Another difference between the two "Wuxing" versions is the way in which the *Odes* quotations are integrated into the text proper: in the Guodian text, they are incorporated without being marked as *Odes* lines, while the Mawangdui manuscript introduces them with the usual formula known from transmitted texts, "Shi yue" 詩曰, thus clearly identifying the respective verses as *Odes* quotations. Yet before linking this formal demarcation of the *Odes* from their embedding text in the *jing* parts to the emergence of a particular exegetical mode as it appears in the corresponding *shuo* parts, we should note that the Guodian and Shanghai Museum "Ziyi" manuscripts also introduce all their *Odes* quotations explicitly: in most cases with "Shi yue" but twice also with "xiao ya yue" 小雅曰 and twice with "da ya yue" 大雅曰. Likewise, in what the Shanghai editors take to be the introductory section of the "Kongzi shilun," slips 2 and 3 of the manuscript mention and briefly characterize the four major sections (but not the subdivision of *nan* in the *guo feng*) we know from the Mao recension, only in reverse order: *song*, *da ya*, *xiao ya*, and *bang feng* 邦風.<sup>21</sup> While the practice of explicitly marking *Odes*

<sup>20</sup> Riegel refers to the whole of the Mawangdui "Wuxing" essay. However, the Guodian counterpart—if we accept the tentative date of the late 4th century BCE—predates the *Xunzi* and thus renders Riegel's overall claim impossible. On the other hand, much of his argument is based on the "shuo" sections—and these may indeed postdate *Xunzi*.

<sup>21</sup> *Bang feng* ("airs of the states") was probably only in Western Han times replaced by *guo feng* to avoid *bang*. Of the four sections, only *xiao ya* is not explicitly mentioned on slips 2 and 3 but there is no doubt that it was originally there in an additional slip placed between these two. Slip 2 discusses first the *song* and then in part also the *da ya*, while slip 3 starts in the middle of the discussion of the *xiao ya* before moving on to the *bang feng*. Both the latter part of the *da ya* discussion and the former

quotations was hence already established by the time of the Guodian manuscript, it perhaps became extended to the "Wuxing" text only thereafter, or was left out in the earlier version for some idiosyncratic reason that so far escapes our understanding. Moreover, the identification of the four major *Odes* divisions by the late 4th century BCE provides further evidence for the early recognition of the *Odes* as a canon that was structured in a unique way.

### The textual variants of the *Odes* in excavated manuscripts<sup>22</sup>

Like the *Odes* quotations in the Guodian, Mawangdui, and Shanghai Museum manuscripts, the fragmentary *Odes* anthology buried at Shuanggudui matches closely the received text. On more than one hundred and seventy bamboo slip fragments, many of them very small and in poor condition, the Shuanggudui *Odes* contain passages from sixty-five *guo feng* and four *xiao ya* songs. Except for the "Gui feng" 檜風, all fifteen *guo feng* sections of the Mao recension are represented, with the titles of songs and sections matching those of the latter. On the other hand, the Shuanggudui fragments differ from the *Mao Shi* in three respects: they are limited almost exclusively to *guo feng* songs;<sup>23</sup> they seem to have been in a different textual order;<sup>24</sup> and they include numerous textual variants.<sup>25</sup>

one of the *xiao ya* are missing.

<sup>22</sup> This section summarizes the results of Kern *forthcoming (a)*.

<sup>23</sup> It seems difficult to imagine that this might be explained as just an accident of preservation. However, perhaps the different sections were buried somewhat separately from one another and may thus have been subject to different environmental conditions.

<sup>24</sup> Hu Pingsheng and Han Ziqiang 1988: 31–35 have observed that while in no case portions of two songs are included on one slip, and while the cords that originally kept the slips together have rotted away so that the original order of the slips can no longer be restored, some slips show on their back imprints from others that therefore must have been next to them in the original arrangement. From the *Odes* included on such adjacent slips, Hu and Han conclude that the overall textual order was different from that of the *Mao Shi*. Likewise, while discussing certain individual *Odes* in clusters that correspond to their arrangement in the *Mao Shi*, the "Kongzi shilun" shows clear differences to that order.

<sup>25</sup> From these variants, Hu Pingsheng and Han Ziqiang 1988: 28–31 conclude that the Shuanggudui *Odes* represent a tradition distinct from both the *Mao Odes* and the *san jia* recensions.

The fragments from the Shuanggudui *Odes* contain 820 characters, the *Odes* quotations from the Mawangdui "Wuxing" manuscript 158 characters, those in the Guodian "Wuxing" manuscript 50 characters, those in the Guodian "Ziyi" manuscript 193 characters, those in the "Kongzi shilun" 64, and those in the Shanghai Museum "Ziyi" 157. The numbers of textual variants, compared to the text in the received Mao edition, are significant: 50 (31.6 per cent) in the Mawangdui "Wuxing," 18 (36 per cent) in the Guodian "Wuxing," 70 (36.3 per cent) in the Guodian "Ziyi,"<sup>26</sup> 67 (42.7 per cent) in the Shanghai Museum "Ziyi,"<sup>27</sup> 26 (40.6 per cent) in the "Kongzi shilun,"<sup>28</sup> and between 220 and 369 (26.8 to 45 per cent) in the Shuanggudui *Odes* anthology.<sup>29</sup> The majority of these variants occur within their respective *xiesheng* 諧聲 ("shared phonophoric") series; they are by definition qualified as *jiajie zi* 假借字 ("loan characters") because the words they normally write are, in general, homophonous or fulfill the rigid criterium for paronomastic use, i.e., they belong to the same rhyme group and have homorganic initials (Karlgrén 1968: 1–18; Boltz 1994: 90–126).<sup>30</sup> Moreover, they can be easily

<sup>26</sup> Here, I do not count the completely different line of four characters from "Du ren shi" mentioned above.

<sup>27</sup> Variants not counted here are the following cases of textual difference: the two-character fragment of the completely different line from "Du ren shi;" in a line from "Wen wang," one character is missing; in two of four lines from "Yi," a particle is missing, changing the line from tetrasyllabic to trisyllabic meter. As the bamboo slips are intact in each of these passages, the characters are genuinely missing in the manuscript.

<sup>28</sup> I have not counted four cases where a particle is left out in the lines of "Yuan qiu" and "Yi jie." In the *Mao Shi*, these lines are tetrasyllabic, ending with the particle *xi* 兮; in the manuscript, the lines are trisyllabic.

<sup>29</sup> As many characters in the Shuanggudui manuscript are only partly legible, it is in many cases impossible to know whether a textual variant was involved in the missing part of a character. The number of 220 refers to those characters of which enough can be seen to identify a variant, while the number of 369 would include all characters that are only partly legible; theoretically, their missing parts could all constitute a textual variant. Striking the middle between "no variants" and "all variants" for these lost parts would place the character/variant ratio right in the mid-thirty per cent range found in the Guodian and Mawangdui manuscripts.

<sup>30</sup> Examples of paronomastic use of characters normally writing words that fall short of this strict definition are documented. They must, however, be identified on a case-by-case basis, and only with hard evidence at hand. As noted by Qiu Xigui 2000: 293–96, the tendency among some scholars, ancient and modern, to allow paronomastic use as soon as the words in question were in some



ascribed to the fact that especially with regard to the distribution of semantic classifiers, the writing system was still relatively fluid in Western Han times (not to speak of the late 4th century BCE).

Far more interesting are therefore those variants that do not belong to the same *xiesheng* series; for each of these, we need to examine the underlying rationale and try to determine whether they represent lexical variants, graphical variants, or simply “copyists’ errors.” The results of this examination may be summarized as follows:<sup>31</sup> the overwhelming majority of non-*xiesheng* series textual variants in the manuscripts are based on homophony or near-homophony. While sometimes very different on the surface of their written appearance, the *Odes* lines from any given manuscript appear highly consistent with the received text (as well as with the *san jia* versions) as soon as one reconstructs their ancient pronunciation.<sup>32</sup> Examples abound in all manuscripts under discussion and include such cases as 州 (\*tjəw) for 舟 (\*tjəw), 居 (\*kjah, \*kja) for 車 (\*khlja, \*kəlja), or 騷 (\*səw) for 掃 (\*səw?) in the Shuanggudui manuscript (Hu Pingsheng and Han Ziqiang 1988: 5-7, 14, 18 [slips 35, 45, 49, 50, 53, 114, 142]); 担 for 瘡 (both \*tan?),<sup>33</sup> 泉泉 [> 競競] (\*hərjak-hərjak) for 赫赫 (\*hərak-hərak), 頌 (\*sljuŋh) for 容 (\*ljun), 佩 (\*khan) for 憇 (\*kharjan),<sup>34</sup> or 自 (\*ljəw) for 攸 (\*ljəw) in the Guodian “Ziyi” manuscript (slips 7, 16, 17, 32, 45), several of them also appearing in the Shanghai Museum “Ziyi,” 詢 (\*gu?) for 觀 (\*kuh),<sup>35</sup> 惇惇 (\*tjəwŋ-tjəwŋ) for 忡忡 (\*thrxəwŋ-thrxəwŋ), 彊 [疆] (\*gjan)

vague sense “similar in sound” (*yin jin* 音近) or because they just shared the same rhyme (*tong yun* 同韻), easily results in arbitrary and irresponsible “emendations” and misinterpretations.

<sup>31</sup> The detailed analysis of these *Odes* variants in the manuscripts from Guodian and Mawangdui is given in Kern *forthcoming (a)*. The Shuanggudui variants are discussed in Hu Pingsheng and Han Ziqiang 1988.

<sup>32</sup> The reconstructions of Zhou Chinese given here are based on Li Fanggui’s 李方桂 system, with Schuessler’s emendations in Schuessler 1987.

<sup>33</sup> With the (also homophonous) 瘡, the transmitted “Ziyi” chapter in the *Liji* differs again from these.

<sup>34</sup> With 憇 in the *Liji* “Ziyi”; 憇 and 佩 belong to the same *xiesheng* series.

<sup>35</sup> With 鉤 (\*ku) in the Mawangdui “Wuxing” manuscript (§ 5A), which belongs to the same *xiesheng* series as Guodian “Wuxing” 詢 (\*gu?). Here and below, I give the paragraph § numbers according to Ikeda 1993, with “A” referring to the *jing* portions and “B” to the *shuo* portions.

for 競 (\*gərjanh),<sup>36</sup> or 彊 [疆] (\*gjan) for 剛 (\*kan) in the Guodian “Wuxing” manuscript (slips 10, 12, 41); 袞袞 (\*tuats-tuats) for 憇憇 (\*trjuat-trjuat), 氏 (\*gji?)—also in the Shanghai Museum “Kongzi shilun”—for 兮 (\*gi?), both 蜚 (\*pjəj?) and 罪 (\*bjəjh) for 飛 (\*mpjəj),<sup>37</sup> 汲 (\*kjəp) for 泣 (\*khərjəp),<sup>38</sup> 嘗 (\*djan) for 上 (\*djan), or 壑壑 (\*hak-hak) and 赤赤 (\*khljak) for 赫赫 (\*hərak-hərak)<sup>39</sup> in the Mawangdui “Wuxing” manuscript (§§ 5A, 7A, 7B, 17A, 17B, 5A). Altogether, at least nineteen out of twenty-six non-*xiesheng* series variants in the Guodian “Ziyi,” fifteen out of twenty-three in the Shanghai Museum “Ziyi,” eight out of eleven in the Guodian “Wuxing,” twenty-one out of twenty-four in the Mawangdui “Wuxing,” and three out of six in the Shanghai Museum “Kongzi shilun” can be determined as paronomastic.

The remaining cases are of various kinds: some involve particles, that is, a category of words that altogether seems to have been particularly unstable in written textual transmission. In the *Odes* quotations under discussion these particles—like 也 (\*ljaj?) for 兮 (\*gi?) as well as for 矣 (\*ljə?) in the Guodian “Ziyi” (slips 36, 39), the Shanghai Museum “Ziyi” (slips 18, 20), and the Shanghai Museum “Kongzi shilun” (slip 22)—seem to have served mainly rhythmic purposes with no particular emphasis on either meaning or sound. Others may be writing errors, like 沸 (\*mpjət) for 涕 (\*thiəj?(h)) in one instance of the Mawangdui “Wuxing” manuscript (§ 7A) while in another passage of the same manuscript it appears correctly as 涕. This category also includes the use of 而 (\*njə) for 天 (\*thin) in the Guodian “Wuxing” manuscript (slip 30); the two graphs are so similar in Chu script that instances of their confusion can be documented among both ancient scribes and modern scholars (Zeng Xiantong 1993: nos. 30, 75). While the numerous loan characters and the few scribal errors are relatively easy to determine, a handful of other variants seem to resist a rational explanation. In some cases, the phonetic relation is unclear, as with 罷 for 一 in Guodian “Wuxing” (slip 16);

<sup>36</sup> With 勳 (\*kjah or \*gja(h)) in the Mawangdui “Wuxing” manuscript (§ 20A), which shares the velar initial but not the \*-ŋ final.

<sup>37</sup> With 非 (\*pjəj) in the Shuanggudui manuscript (slips 21, 23).

<sup>38</sup> With probably 深 (cf. 罌 \*gləp) in the Guodian “Wuxing” manuscript (slip 17); see Qiu Xigui’s note in *Jingmen shi bowuguan* 1998: 152, n. 19.

<sup>39</sup> With 虞虞 ([競競] \*hərjak-hərjak) in the Guodian “Wuxing” manuscript (slips 25–26).

the same line is quoted with 𠄎 for 一 (\*ʔjit) in Guodian “Ziyi” (slip 39) and with 一 in the Shanghai Museum “Ziyi” (slip 20). In other instances, we may face actual lexical variants. Altogether, the textual variants of *Odes* exhibit a string of significant phenomena:

First, in every instance of an *Odes* textual variant in the manuscripts from Guodian, Mawangdui, and Shuanggudui, the text differs not only from the received Mao version but also from any other manuscript version. In addition, with the exception of two instances of Guodian, Shanghai Museum, and *Liji* “Ziyi” 也 where Mao has 矣 or 兮, all manuscript variants also differ from the *san jia* fragments.<sup>40</sup> In other words, no two sets of *Odes* quotations among these manuscripts or between a manuscript and a received text are in accordance.<sup>41</sup>

Second, apart from grammatical or rhythmic particles that at least in poetic texts seem particularly prone to mutual interchange, binomial expressions are among the words most frequently written with different characters. Rhyming, alliterative, and reduplicative binomes are primarily euphonic expressions of only loosely defined meaning. As they, strictly speaking, do not represent specific words but can be flexibly applied to describe—or embody as onomatopoeia—a broad range of phenomena, they do not even need to adhere to the strict princi-

<sup>40</sup> As the *Liji* is generally considered a work of scholars from Qi, the received “Ziyi” variants are usually subsumed under those of the *Qi Shi*.

<sup>41</sup> There is one significant exception to this statement: 28 of the 67 variants in the Shanghai Museum manuscript “Ziyi” coincide with their counterparts in the Guodian text. Such a unique coherence among known manuscripts corresponds with the overall appearance of the two “Ziyi” texts: while the Shanghai Museum slips are occasionally fragmentary, the two manuscripts share many of their graphical peculiarities (hence show an exceptionally low variant ratio between each other), and they are of precisely the same length, contents, and internal textual order (hence differ in the same way from the received “Ziyi” in the *Liji*). All of this is entirely unprecedented among independently found manuscripts or between a manuscript and its received counterpart, and it strongly corroborates the suspicion (Ma Chengyuan 2001: 2) that the Shanghai Museum slips—which began to appear on the Hong Kong market just a few months after the Guodian manuscript excavation of late 1993—may indeed come from the very Guodian site we are already familiar with. The suspicion gains further support from the fact that the same degree of coherence can also be observed between the Guodian “Xing zi ming chu” 性自命出 and the Shanghai Museum “Xing qing lun” 性情論 manuscripts. In view of this overall situation, I am reluctant to treat the Guodian texts and their Shanghai Museum counterparts as mutually independent.

ples of paronomastic use. It should be noted that these binomes are a feature almost exclusively confined to poetic texts; accordingly, the manuscript evidence corresponds with the picture we get from other early performance texts like the Western Han *fu* 賦 (Kern *forthcoming* (b), Kamatani 1996). The written form of such binomes was generally irrelevant and is therefore of no particular help in order to determine the—indeed very flexible—“meaning” implied (Kennedy 1959, Knechtges 1987: 3–12).

Third, the overwhelming majority of textual variants are paronomastic in nature. This means that the different graphs were still writing words of the same sound. In all probability, this also means that these variants represent not different homophonous words (i.e., lexical variants) but simply write the same words with different graphs. If there were a significant number of lexical variants, there would be no reason why almost all of them had to be homophonous or near-homophonous; in texts with substantial lexical differences, we would expect to see a number of them also being phonetically distinct.

Fourth, with the two exceptions of 而 for 天 and 沸 for 滂, the relatively few remaining variants cannot be explained as “copyists errors,” that is, as optical mistakes occurring in the process of copying one written version of a text into another one. Moreover, the two exceptions mentioned by no means need to be explained this way; they may just represent scribal errors as they occur in any writing, regardless of whether or not a written model was at hand (Kern *forthcoming* [c]).

Fifth, the overall variant ratio of consistently above 30 (in some cases even above 40) per cent by which the *Odes* manuscript quotations differ from the received Mao recension is about ten times higher than that of all three *san jia* recensions taken together, as far as we can tell from their identified fragments.<sup>42</sup> Viewed from this perspective, the traditional idea that the relatively few *san jia* variants reflect three oral transmission lines of the *Odes* that were originally independent both from the Mao recension and from one another certainly needs some qualification. As the Warring States and Western Han manuscripts now give us an authentic understanding of the extent to which written versions of the *Odes*

<sup>42</sup> For this, I have compared the *Odes* lines in the manuscripts with their counterparts in Wang Xianqian 1987, the reference edition for all identified *san jia* variants.

differed individually from any second version, the four hitherto known Western Han recensions of the *Odes* appear to have been much closer to each other than we could reasonably expect from mutually independent oral transmissions. We are therefore left with one of two possible scenarios: the known variants are either mere remnants of originally far more diverging texts, or they reflect the fact that the four recensions were never mutually independent writings to begin with and may instead have adhered to a single—presumably the early imperial—standard. In fact, the two alternatives are not mutually exclusive: even if the traditionally known Western Han versions of the *Mao Shi* and the *san jia* represented a by and large unified imperial text, the manuscript evidence still forces us to assume an overall retrospective standardization of the numerous *Odes* quotations throughout Eastern Zhou and early imperial texts. The only question is whether we assign this standardization already to Western Han or only to post-Eastern Han times, after the Mao recension had finally gained its dominance.

Together, these observations suggest an interesting double phenomenon. Without question, the *Odes* circulated in highly stable wording already in the late 4th century BCE (and probably earlier), and they were recognized as a canonical text that spoke, and as such was quoted, with the authority from the past. In almost all cases of textual variants, as soon as a line from the *Odes* was heard, its meaning became, probably, more or less unambiguous—no matter how it was written. The manuscript quotations therefore testify to a remarkable authenticity of the received Mao text. This impression is further corroborated by the nomenclature of the different sections (*song, da ya, xiao ya*, and the different parts of the *guo feng*) of the anthology that in one way or another are mentioned in the Guodian “Ziyi,” the Shuanggudui fragments, and the Shanghai Museum manuscripts.

At the same time, the stable wording was accompanied by a fundamentally unstable writing; I therefore doubt that the *Odes* circulated among the cultural and political elite in any fixed written form during late Warring States and even early imperial times.<sup>43</sup> It is obvious that their textual differences cannot be traced back to copyists’ errors, as such errors would have resulted in similar characters representing words of often very different sounds. The manuscripts show the opposite

<sup>43</sup> For the same conclusion, see O Man-jong 2001: 132–37.

phenomenon: very different graphs representing words of identical or near-identical sounds.

### The early teaching and transmission of canonical texts

None of the written versions we are now aware of, including that of the Mao recension, can therefore be regarded as “the original text”;<sup>44</sup> instead, I would like to suggest that any written version was but an auxiliary and secondary means to transmit the *Odes*. Thus, the *Odes* could not have circulated independently as writings to be read without further guidance. Both their faithful transmission and their true comprehension depended on the text as it was heard and explained; the mere written surface was not self-evident with respect to the words it represented. Memorized—and perhaps also carried—by teachers, philosophers, and political strategists, the *Odes* could travel large distances, but as written texts, they are not likely to have done so physically on their own. Whoever may have encountered the lines we now see in the manuscripts needed to already know the text in order to understand it: taking the characters at face value would have generated as many different textual meanings as there were manuscripts, and some of these meanings would have remained plainly unintelligible. It is here where the role of the teacher comes in, and where the situation of early *Odes* teaching, transmission and interpretation is to be considered.

Each of the twenty-nine exegetical works of the *Odes* nominally known from the “Monograph on Arts and Letters” (“Yiwenzhi” 藝文志) of the *Hanshu* (Ban Gu 1987: 30.1707–8; Gu Shi 1987: 35–39; Chen Guoqing 1983: 34–40; Zhang Shunhui 1990: 33–40) and some other early sources (Hightower 1948: 254–59) is associated with one of the four traditionally recognized teaching traditions of the *Odes*. While all but two of these works are lost, their original existence reflects the strong emphasis on exegesis in the transmission of the *Odes*. This corresponds to the *Shiji* 史記 and *Hanshu* accounts of scholarly lineages through which the works of the five canons (*wu jing* 五經) were transmitted and received in the early empire, as in the biography of the eminent early Western Han *Odes* master Shen Pei

<sup>44</sup> See also Li Jiashu 1990: 205–22.

申培 (ca.220-ca.135 BCE) who is said to have taught exclusively orally, without handing down a written version of his explanations (Sima Qian 1982: 121.3120-22; Ban Gu 1987: 88.3608; Hightower 1948: 269). According to numerous passages in *Shiji* and *Hanshu*, the works of the canon were—just as in pre-imperial times—orally “discussed” (*lun* 論), “expounded” (*yan* 言), “practiced” (*xi* 習), “explained” (*shuo* 說, *jiang* 講) and, as expression of their “mastery” (*zhi* 治), “recited” (*song* 誦) throughout Western Han times (Kern *forthcoming [a]*). While the exegetical works listed in the *Hanshu* “Yiwenzhi” and later sources may have been written down early in Western Han times, it is very unlikely that they circulated as books independent from their teachers. Nothing suggests that one could obtain the mastery of the *Odes* on one’s own, or that texts were freely available to be ordered from somewhere; instead, the historical sources provide outlines of how the canonical texts were transmitted along uninterrupted lines of teachers and disciples (as represented, e.g., in Tjan 1949/52: 1: 82-89). In this aspect, the art of canonical learning (*jingshu* 經術, *rushu* 儒術) parallels that of medical expertise (Keegan 1988: 219-47): “Even when a text stresses hygiene or treating a condition before it becomes an illness, the focus is still on the physician, never the patient. Texts are only for teaching physicians. They are not for general distribution or self-help” (Keegan 1988: 231).

On the other hand, in view of the allegedly near-complete extinction of traditional scholarship under the Qin, and hence its all the more glorious renaissance under the Western Han, it is somewhat surprising that we do not have more extensive accounts that would help us to imagine the particular conditions and circumstances under which texts that purportedly had been completely erased were now reconstructed.<sup>45</sup> Of all six canons (if one includes a *Yue* [Music] canon, as Ban Gu 班固 [32–92] does in the “Yiwenzhi”), only the transmission of the *Documents* (*Shu* 書) from the Qin to the Han is related in some detail and hence has attracted a great amount of traditional and modern scholarship (e.g., Pelliot 1916; Chen

<sup>45</sup> The only text that is explicitly noted as having been transmitted without interruption is the *Changes* that as an oracle book was exempted from the Qin proscription (*Hanshu* 30.1704). The fact that so many texts of the pre-imperial philosophical “masters” (*zhuzi* 諸子) were available in Han times has led Wang Chong 王充 (27–ca.100) in his *Lunheng* 論衡 to the conclusion that “although the Qin were without the Way, they did not burn the [books of the philosophical] masters” (Huang Hui 1990: 1159).

Mengjia 1985; Jiang Shanguo 1988; Nylan 1995; Liu Qiyu 1997). For our purposes here, it might be useful to recall certain details from the famous story of how Chao Cuo 鼂錯 (d. 154 BCE) during the reign of Emperor Wen 文 (r. 180–157 BCE) obtained the *Shu* teachings from the then only living authority on the text, Fu Sheng 伏勝 (born 260 BCE). When the emperor looked for experts on the *Shu*, Fu Sheng, the former Qin imperial erudite (*boshi* 博士), was already more than ninety years old and could not be summoned to court. Therefore, Chao Cuo was sent to him to “be taught” (*shou* 受) the *Shu*. After his return to court, Chao submitted Fu’s explanations (*shuo* 說) of the book (Sima Qian 1982: 101.2745, 121.3124; Ban Gu 1987: 88.3603, 30.1706, 49.2277). Wei Hong 衛宏 (mid-first cent. CE), in a lost preface to a *guwen* 古文 (“ancient script”) *Shangshu* 尚書,<sup>46</sup> has further elaborated the story: because of his age, Fu Sheng “could not speak correctly; his speech was unintelligible, and he let his daughter transmit his words to instruct [Chao] Cuo. The dialect of the people from [Fu Sheng’s native place of] Qi differed in many instances from that of the people from [Chao Cuo’s native place of] Jingchuan; what Cuo could not comprehend was two or three out of ten, and he roughly brought his own understanding to the reading.”<sup>47</sup> In yet another step, the pseudo-Kong Anguo 孔安國 preface to the *guwen Shangshu* 古文尚書 (ca.317) notes that Fu Sheng had lost his copy of the canon and transmitted his instruction orally from memory (*Shangshu zhengyi* 1.2a). The pseudo-Kong Anguo note is dubious—if Fu Sheng had memorized and could still teach the *Shu*, why did he not dictate the book together with his teachings into somebody’s brush?<sup>48</sup> However, the emphasis on oral teaching as a prerequisite to “read out

<sup>46</sup> The *guwen Shangshu* that Wei Hong is referring to might well have been identical with Fu Sheng’s text; for the “ancient script” *Documents* during the Han dynasty, see Nylan 1995.

<sup>47</sup> The preface is quoted partly, though at different length, in the Tang commentaries to both the *Shiji* and the *Hanshu* passages. The commentary in Sima Qian 1982: 101.2746 is by Zhang Shoujie 張守節 (fl. 725–735), the one in *Hanshu* 88.3603 by Yan Shigu 顏師古 (581–645).

<sup>48</sup> There are other problems with the traditional accounts of the loss and recovery of the *Documents*. First, Fu Sheng as an imperial erudite would have been exempted from the Qin bibliocaust in 213 BCE and had no reason to hide his copy in the first place. Second, as late as in the first century CE, Wei Hong was apparently the first scholar to identify the Ru scholars as the actual victims of the Qin “execution of the scholars” in 212 BCE (see his preface to the earlier *guwen Shangshu*, quoted in the Tang commentary to *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書 66.2167). Third, the pseudo-Kong Anguo preface is the earliest text where, more than half a millennium after the event, the famous—and historically

loud" (*du* 讀) and understand the written text is a genuine echo from the past, as is Wei Hong's more complex account. When Chao Cuo returned to the court, he submitted not simply the canon but Fu Sheng's explanation of it.

The same is certainly true for the early transmission of the *Odes* which "remained complete while encountering the Qin [bibliocaust] because they were recited [from memory] and not only [written] on bamboo and silk" (Ban Gu 1987: 30.1708). As preimperial and early imperial manuscripts are on equal distance to one another as well as to the received Mao recension and the fragments of the *san jia* versions, it remains entirely speculative to which extent, if at all, the *Odes* were affected by the bibliocaust—especially as their imperial version, like that of the *Documents*, was exempted from the proscription (Sima Qian 1982: 6.255, 87.2546–47). The ideological scenario of Qin state terror and the radical breakdown of classical scholarship after 213 BCE is not supported by the manuscript evidence. Proposing a written *Odes* transmission that was more stable before the bibliocaust than in the decades thereafter, one is necessarily trapped: either the numerous and largely coherent *Odes* quotations in transmitted pre-Qin texts (and with them the Mao recension), or those in the Guodian "Ziyi" and "Wuxing" manuscripts would reflect the "original" form of the *Odes*—in each case leaving the alternative versions unexplained.

I would instead suggest that our current evidence rather points to an early fluidity of the *Odes* that only gradually, and continuously, became consolidated as a more or less uniformly written text during the early empire, probably alongside other

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flawed—formula *fenshu kangru* 焚書坑儒 can be found. As I have argued elsewhere (Kern 2000a: 183–96), there is good reason to accept both the bibliocaust and the execution of scholars under the Qin as long as one looks for the victims of these measures not among the leading Ru erudites, officially employed at the Qin imperial court (see also Hsiao 1979: 470; Chen Pan 1993: 2:949–54; Kanaya 1992: 230–57; Petersen 1995; Ochi 1988–97: 2:576–95; Ma Feibai 1982: 2:893–98), but among their scholarly rivals outside the court who circulated their teachings beyond official sanction and control. The pseudo-Kong Anguo preface – the latest and most ideological account—of course served the concrete purpose of demonstrating the superiority of the newly assembled *guwen Shangshu* that was purportedly the one retrieved from the walls of Confucius's house (Ban Gu 1987: 30.1706) over an allegedly mere oral tradition of the *jinwen* 今文 ("modern script") version associated with Fu Sheng. This important scholastic topos seems to have originated only with Liu Xin 劉歆 (d. 23 A.D.) who claimed that the *guwen* texts were more reliable than their *jinwen* counterparts because they had been received in writing and not merely from oral tradition (Ban Gu 1987: 36.1968–71).

venerated ancient works. In other words, it was perhaps only through the existence of the empire and its increasing centralization, monopolization, standardization, and bureaucratization of classical learning that written versions of the traditional canon came to play any significant role. Information like that mentioned above on Shen Pei, or that on the teaching of the canonical works in general during early Western Han times, has to be placed within the horizon and continuous development of immediate teacher-disciple instruction, inherited from Confucius and other Warring States philosophical masters. The authoritative version of a canonical work was not the canon as such, and not the canon in any particular written form, but the canon as it was embedded, explained, and disseminated in oral instruction. In each local context, this instruction may have made use of locally produced written versions of the *Odes* that were independent from other such idiosyncratic versions; none of them overruled, and thereby distorted, the substance of the memorized canonical word.<sup>49</sup>

#### From reception to production aesthetics: the early development of *Odes* exegesis

As the *Odes* quotations show a higher ratio of textual variants than their embedding "Wuxing" and "Ziyi" philosophical discourses, it is possible that the local scribes of these manuscripts may have mastered the contemporaneous philosophical idiom more fluently than the archaic and poetic diction of the *Odes*. This diction, on the other hand, apparently belonged to the *koiné* of the educated elite all across the Chinese realm, elevated above the realities of local dialects and preserved in, as well as transmitted through, the canonical texts. Such a *koiné* would account for the above noted coherence between *Odes* and early *Chuci* rhymes, and it would explain why the nobles from various regions had no difficulties in understanding each other's *Odes* recitations. I therefore suspect this *koiné* to be the *ya yan* 雅言 ("elegant standard speech") Confucius purportedly used exclusively for

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<sup>49</sup> This scenario to some extent challenges the often uniquely privileged practice of writing over all other forms of cultural expression; for my arguments cautioning against such elevation of the written word, see Kern 2000a, 2000b, 2000c, 2001, *forthcoming (a)*, *forthcoming (b)*.

the *Odes*, the *Documents*, and matters of ritual (*Analects* 7/18). Here, I take *ya yan* to comprise three different meanings: “elegance” (in the sense of *ya* versus *su* 俗), “standard” or “correctness” (in the sense of *zheng* 正, as defined in the “Great Preface” to the *Odes* [*Mao Shi zhengyi* 1/1.4b]), and “Chineseness” (in the sense of the well-attested early paronomastic use of *ya* for *xia* 夏 [Liang Qichao 1941: 16/74.95-96; Kern 1997: 24–25]). *Ya yan* would then be best understood as a linguistic ideal: an elegant and standard idiom that distinguished its speakers from both the common people and those outside the Chinese cultural realm. When a man of cultured demeanor recited the *Odes* in *ya yan*, he did both: he performed the cultural memory, and he transmitted it in its unique form.

This definition of *ya yan* seems to fit the language of the *Odes*, as the anthology supposedly contains songs from various Eastern Zhou states without representing to any substantial extent their dialectical differences. It also fits what one may call the distinction between local writing and translocal memory: the *Odes* quotations found in the south are written in Chu calligraphy, but they do not represent Chu dialect (nor, probably, any other living dialect of late Warring States or early imperial times). They were removed from ordinary local language use in terms of vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and style; they were archaic, poetic, and perhaps even hieratic. Obviously, this diction, which must have generated a tangible distance between the words of the *Odes* and those of their embedding texts, was not detrimental to their function as proof texts.<sup>50</sup> Especially in speech, the performative effect of verse as proof text—which certainly originated in Eastern Zhou oral discourses and from there was transferred to later philosophical treatises—must have been considerable.<sup>51</sup> One might even assume that the very na-

<sup>50</sup> The best treatment of the *Odes* as proof texts can be found in Lewis 1999, chapter four.

<sup>51</sup> The performative power of such poetic speech is often exploited from Warring States times onwards, even without explicitly quoting the *Odes*. Typical examples include the famous speech Su Qin 蘇秦 (4th cent. BCE) is said to have delivered to King Hui 惠 of Qin (r. 337–311 BCE), where in a crucial section, the rhetorician falls into tetrasyllabic rhythms with rapid rhyme changes after every couplet (Zhu Zugeng 1985: 118–20); or the speech in the *Liji* chapter “Yueji” 樂記 (“Records of Music”) where Confucius’ disciple Zi Xia 子夏 (5th cent. BCE) instructs the Marquis Wen of Wei 魏文侯 (r. 424–387 BCE) in tetrasyllabic verse about the correct old and lascivious new music, applying monotonous and regular rhymes in the section on old music but chaotic and irregular rhymes in the one on new music (*Liji zhengyi* 38.310b, 39.312b). Similarly, the Han *fu* 賦 (rhapsody), often structured in dialogues, can be seen as an extension of this rhetoric; see Kern *forthcoming* (b).

ture of archaic poetic speech enhanced the truth claims it was meant to cap, parallel to the significance of an ancient and otherwise long abandoned idiom in the religious rituals of other cultures: “In preliterate as in literate societies sacred languages contain an archaic component, whether in the form of a totally different language or whether in the partial preservation of another idiom; and this archaic component remains so long as rites refer back to a period of revelation and insist on the authority of true texts properly transmitted either orally or in written form” (Connerton 1989: 67). Here, we should keep in mind that in early China, the *Odes* were the single corpus of texts to fully embrace the human condition in both its profane and religious aspects, occupying a status close to that of sacred texts elsewhere. Not unlike the poetry of ancient Greece (Detienne 1996), archaic Chinese poetic language was the language of memory, vision, and truth, and it was primarily preserved and perpetuated in religious, divinatory, and political performances (Kern 2000b). This understanding of the *Odes* is reflected in various ways of their early application and interpretation.

Stanzas and short quotations from the *Odes* were selectively applied in specific contexts, as in the numerous performances mentioned in *Zuozhuan* (Zeng Qinliang 1993; Van Zoeren 1991: 38–44; Lewis 1999: 147–76). Here, it was to no small extent the situative context that determined the meaning of a song—a meaning that was not confined to the literal and absolute one of the words but that appeared only by means of exploring their potential as illustration.<sup>52</sup> In other words, an *Ode* was not reduced to any singular meaning but embodied paradigmatic expressions, coded models of exemplary virtue, elegant speech, and patterned conduct—i.e., *wen* in the Warring States sense of the word (Kern 2001)—that could be selectively evoked according to the given situation in order to cap a broad range of political, moral, or philosophical arguments, or simply to identify the speaker as a cultured gentleman. As Confucius insists, memorizing the *Odes* without being able to apply them in government and diplomacy was but an idle exercise (*Analects* 13/5). Therefore, the universal significance and elevated status of the *Odes* was found not in any dogmatic and mechanical orthodoxy of their literal interpretation but, on the contrary, in the fact that they could mean different things to different people in different situations. This practice is still reflected

<sup>52</sup> O Man-jong 2001: 16–43 provides a series of excellent examples of this practice.

in the only exegetical work that has survived from the *san jia* traditions, the anecdotal *Han Shi waixhuan*, which provides examples not of how to read the *Odes* but of how to use them properly (Hightower 1952; Hightower 1948: 263). This, precisely, is also the lesson we learn from the Shanghai Museum “Kongzi shilun” (Ma Chengyuan 2001: 146–47).

Such flexibility in interpretation and application rested in a commonly shared understanding that the *Odes* both fully represented the human condition and could be used to guide human behavior. In his study of the Mawangdui “Wuxing” commentary to “Guan ju,” “Shi jiu,” and “Yan yan,” Jeffrey Riegel has identified readings that differ substantially from those of the four Western Han recensions. In the case of “Guan ju,” the “Wuxing” manuscript in its *shuo* section (§ 25B) comments that the male persona in the song expresses an urgent sexual desire; however, the song ultimately “illustrates” (*yu* 諭) how the “minor desire” (*xiao hao* 小好) for sex is controlled and overcome by the “major desire” (*da hao* 大好) for appropriate social behavior: in Riegel’s translation of the Mawangdui interpretation, “if the urgency [of sexual desire] is as extreme as this, would he copulate in the presence of his parents? He would rather die than do that. Would he copulate in the presence of his brothers? He would die before doing that. Would he copulate in the presence of a countryman? He still would not do it. To fear family and to a lesser extent to fear others, is ritual principle. To use sex to illustrate ritual, is but to advance” (Riegel 1997: 177). As Riegel notes, such a reading tallies well with the statement in *Xunzi* (Wang Xianqian 1986: 19.336) that in their “desire for sex” (*hao se* 好色), the *guo feng*, according to an (anonymous) teaching tradition (*zhuan* 傳), “satisfy the desires but do not transgress the correct stopping point” (*ying qi yu er bu qian qi zhi* 盈其欲而不愆其止); therefore, “their sincerity can be matched with that of [inscriptions on] metal and stone,<sup>53</sup> their melodies can be brought into the ancestral temple” (*qi cheng ke bi yu jin shi, qi sheng ke na yu zong miao* 其誠可比於金石, 其聲可內於宗廟).

Similarly, a passage in Liu An’s 劉安 (175–122 BCE) “Lisao zhuan” 離騷傳, copied into the Qu Yuan 屈原 biography of Sima Qian’s *Shiji* (84.2482), states

<sup>53</sup> “Metal and stone” refers primarily to bronzes (bells and vessels) and chimestones, that is, the paraphernalia used in the ancestral sacrifices of early China; see Kern 2000a: 50–51.

that the *guo feng* “[express a] desire for sex but do not lead to licentiousness” (*hao se er bu yin* 好色而不淫).<sup>54</sup> The sentence ancestral to both this line and the statement in *Xunzi* is *Analects* 3/20—“Guan ju expresses pleasure but does not lead to licentiousness, expresses sorrow but is not harmful” (“Guan ju” *le er bu yin, ai er bu shang* 關雎樂而不淫, 哀而不傷); together, all these passages point to an early understanding not only of “Guan ju” but also of the *guo feng* in general that on the one hand acknowledged the sentiments expressed in these songs while on the other hand taking the songs themselves as encouragements to control these sentiments.<sup>55</sup> A historicizing twist in the understanding of “Guan ju” as pointing at the desire for sex as something that “cuts into one’s nature and shortens one’s years” (*hao se fa xing duan nian* 好色伐性短年), and that ultimately both hastens and expresses the decline of the ruling dynasty, can be found in the *san jia* interpretations (Wang Xianqian 1987: 1.4). All three traditions differ from the Mao exegesis by taking the song as a piece not of praise but of criticism, with the Lu reading—adopted by Sima Qian (Sima Qian 1982: 14.509)—explicitly relating the song to King Kang 康 (r. 1005/3–978 BCE) of Zhou who’s “virtuous power became deficient in the bedchamber” (*de que yu fang* 德缺於房).

Most importantly, this early understanding of “Guan ju” is now supported by the Shanghai Museum “Kongzi shilun” where the discussion of the song extends over four fragments. On slip 10, the text states that the song “uses sex to illustrate ritual” (*yi se yu yu li* 以色喻於禮);<sup>56</sup> slip 11 adds that “as for the transformative force of ‘Guan ju,’ its longing is overflowing” (“Guan ju” *zhi gai, ze qi si yi yi* 關雎之改, 則其思益矣);<sup>57</sup> slip 12 asks rhetorically “turning back and leading towards

<sup>54</sup> While still often mistaken as Sima Qian’s own opinion on the *guo feng*, the passage has long been recognized as going back to Liu An’s treatise on the “Lisao.” Liu An’s text is quoted in Ban Gu’s “Lisao xu” 離騷序, which in turn is preserved in Wang Yi’s 王逸 (d. 158) commentary to the “Lisao”; see Hong Xingzu 1986: 1.49. The Qu Yuan biography in the *Shiji* is altogether a heterogeneous patchwork, combining—without acknowledgement—texts from different sources.

<sup>55</sup> For a good account of the tension between desire and morality, as it is reflected in the *Odes* and discussed in early philosophical texts, see O Man-jong 2001: 61–87.

<sup>56</sup> Here and in most of the following quotations from the “Kongzi shilun,” I follow the transcription and interpretation of the graphs in Ma Chengyuan 2001; on this basis, I present the text only in its modern *kaishu* 楷書 form.

<sup>57</sup> Here and in the following quote, I depart in two instances from the Shanghai Museum editors’

ritual, can this not also bring about transformation?" (*fan na yu li, bu yi neng gai hu* 反內於禮，不亦能改乎); and slip 14 finally adds that "as for the fourth stanza, it gives happiness. With the delight [generated by the music] of *qin* and *se* zithers, it indulges in the pleasure of erotic desire, with the joy [generated by the music] of bells and drums..." (*qi si zhang ze yu yi, yi qin se zhi yue, xi bao se zhi wan, yi zhong gu zhi le* 其四章則愉矣，以琴瑟之悅，嬉好色之沅，以鐘鼓之樂...). As much as this interpretation differs from the Mao exegesis, according to which "Guan ju" praises the virtue of the kingly wife (by later commentators then concretely identified as the wife of King Wen 文 [r. 1099/56-1050 BCE] of Zhou), it is at equal distance to the modern standard reading of the text as a—perfectly harmless and appropriate—marriage song.

One cannot help relating the Mawangdui "Wuxing" and Shanghai Museum "Kongzi shilun" reading of "Guan ju" to one of the most notorious pieces from the "Zheng feng" 鄭風 section, "Qiang Zhongzi" 將仲子 (# 76, incidentally also mentioned elsewhere [slip 17] in the "Kongzi shilun"), where a female persona urges her apparently all too impetuous lover not to jump over the wall because she is afraid of what her parents (stanza one), her brothers (stanza two), and the people around (stanza three) may say. Zheng Qiao has famously characterized "Qiang Zhongzi" as the "words of a licentious eloper" (*yin benzhe zhi ci* 淫奔者之辭), a verdict that Zhu Xi cited with appreciation (Zhu Xi 4.13a-b). While Zhu Xi thus acknowledged the open eroticism of certain *Odes*, especially of a number of "Zheng feng" and "Wei feng" 衛風 songs, he insisted that such pieces were actually to be taken as warnings against licentious behavior (Wong and Lee 1989: 214–15). This corresponds with the notion that Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 B.C.–A.D. 18) applied to the Western Han *fu* before lamenting its utter failure: according to Yang, the *fu* was meant to "suade" (*feng* 諷) by drawing analogies (*tui lei* 推類)—yet unfortunately, it did not restrain but, on the contrary, only encouraged improper behavior and therefore should be abandoned (Ban Gu 1987: 87B.3575; Wang Rongbao 1987: 3.45). The *fu* of the *Odes* authors (*shiren zhi fu* 詩人之賦), in

transcription. Where the editors transcribe *yi* 怡 ("delight"), Xing Wen 邢文 (unpublished manuscript) makes a strong case for *gai* 改, a word I understand here as "transformative force" or "transformation." I also agree with Li Xueqin (2002: 1) and Jiang Guanghui (2002: 4) who both interpret the transcribed *ai* 溢 as *yi* 益 ("overflowing"), that is, as a *xiesheng* variant.

Yang's words, were "gorgeous and provide standards" (*li yi ze* 麗以則), those of the rhapsodists (*ciren zhi fu* 辭人之賦) were "gorgeous and lead to licentiousness" (*li yi yin* 麗以淫; Wang Rongbao 1987: 3.49; cf. Ban Gu 1987: 30.1756; Knechtges 1976: 89-97; Doeringer 1971: 119-79; Kern forthcoming [b]).<sup>58</sup>

Not merely the word *yin* 淫—with its strong sexual associations—is common to these various statements on early Chinese poetry. All of them speak only to some extent about what the songs and rhapsodies describe; more importantly, the emphasis is on the *effects* these descriptions and their performance have on their audience. In other words, Zhu Xi's interpretation returns to the very performative force of the songs that is noted in the "Wuxing" commentary, in the "Kongzi shilun," in *Xunzi*, in the *Shiji*, and by Yang Xiong. The ultimate meaning of a song is generated not just by its own words but only in the process of its reception—more precisely, the attentive and appreciative reception generated and guided by a teacher. Therefore, I indeed propose that beginning with *Analects* 3/20, all the main verbs in the relevant passages cited above should be read as causative: "Guan ju" expresses pleasure but *does not lead to licentiousness*, expresses sorrows but *is not harmful*." The *Analects*, *Xunzi*, and Liu An's remark, if read in isolation, might be ambiguous in this point; but the "Wuxing" commentary and the "Kongzi shilun" fragments, as well as Yang Xiong's and Zhu Xi's statements rest firmly in such a performative, reception-centered approach to early poetry.<sup>59</sup>

Considering the *Odes* as performance texts (Kern 2000b) implies paying attention not only to their contents but also to their aesthetic characteristics that contributed to their force of patterned expression. Famous passages from the *Analects* illustrate well the primacy of aesthetic form over literal meaning in Warring States times (Kern 2001), e.g., in Zigong's 子貢 remark that "the Master's patterned demeanor (*wenzhang* 文章) can be known, but what the Master says about human nature and the Way of Heaven cannot be known" (*Analects* 5/13). It would there-

<sup>58</sup> Yang Xiong here conflates two meanings of the term *fu*: on the one hand, *fu* as the literary genre, on the other, *fu* as the poetic mode of "exposition." The "*fu* of the *Odes* authors" refers probably only to the latter; the "*fu* of the rhapsodists" to both.

<sup>59</sup> The reader familiar with Austin 1962, Searle 1969, Iser 1978, and Fingarette 1972 will easily identify the linguistic, aesthetic, and philosophical implications and perspectives of this observation; there is no room to dwell upon them here.



fore be anachronistic and reductionist to think of “Guan ju” just in terms of its wording; when Confucius recited and taught the song in “elegant standard speech” (*ya yan*), the power of ritualized performance easily fenced the literal expression of sexual desire and impressed instead a sense of dignity and appropriate demeanor on the audience. The emphasis on reception that defines both the “Wuxing” commentary and Zhu Xi’s discussion of the *Odes* thus necessarily implies an emphasis on performance. Accordingly, the “Kongzi shilun,” especially in the section that the Shanghai editors consider to be introductory, pays due attention to both the performance of the *Odes* and their relation to the human emotional disposition, as in the following passage from slip 1: “Confucius said: ‘With the *Odes*, do not conceal [your] intentions; in music, do not conceal [your] emotional disposition; in your patterned demeanor, do not conceal [your] speech!’” (*shi wu yin zhi, yue wu yin qing, wen wu yin yan* 詩亡隱志，樂亡隱情，文亡隱言).<sup>60</sup> Similarly, on slip 3 the text states that because the *bang feng* include [various] matters (*bang feng qi na wu ye* 邦風其納物也), one “broadly observes human customs in them and greatly collects materials in them; their speech is patterned, their melodies are good” (*bo guan ren su yan, da lian cai yan, qi yan wen, qi sheng shan* 博觀人俗焉，大斂材焉，其言文，其聲善). New is neither the relation between music and emotional disposition (indeed a core theme of the early Chinese discourse on music) nor the statement that the *bang feng* or *guo feng* allow one to observe human affairs (a central topos in the early discussion of the *Odes*), nor that speech has to be patterned in order to be efficacious and lasting (noted already noted in *Zhuozhuan* [Xiang 25; Yang Bojun 1993: 1106]). Yet more explicitly than any other early text, the “Kongzi shilun” interlocks these elements with one another.

The double emphasis on performance and reception takes us back to an issue discussed above in connection with the question of textual variants, namely, the doubts that the *Odes* text may have travelled in written form on its own. As without instructive guidance, the text would have remained problematic on the basis of its graphical appearance, it would have remained equally ambiguous on the mere surface of its wording. A teacher was required for both: to recite and teach the right words, and to provide an appropriate interpretation (that could then be

<sup>60</sup> Here, I depart from the Shanghai Museum editors’ transcription. Following Qiu Xigui (2002: 1–2), I take the third character of each phrase to be interpreted as *yin* 隱 (“to conceal”).

flexibly adapted to various situative contexts). This is especially true for the highly ambiguous *bang feng* or *guo feng* that, as Paul Goldin has noted, “are more difficult, from a hermeneutical point of view,” than the *ya* and *song* (Goldin 2001). Clearly, the “Wuxing” and “Kongzi shilun” interpretation of “Guan ju” does not come out of the song itself; it represents a particular, and quite apodictic, exegetical approach that is backed by nothing but a teaching and performance tradition.

Another element especially in the “Wuxing” interpretation of the *Odes*, this time in the discussion of “Shi jiu” and “Yan yan,” is what Riegel has called “introversion:” according to the *jing* section of the Guodian and Mawangdui manuscripts, both songs express that “a gentleman is cautious about his singularity” (*junzi shen qi du* 君子慎其獨), which is then elaborated upon in the *shuo* part of the Mawangdui version. The same focus on the inner state of mind appears also in the discussion of “Cao chong” in the *jing* section, again already in the Guodian manuscript, where the song is employed as “a classical reference to the nature of selfcultivation” (Cook 2000: 124). Such an interpretation comes astoundingly close to the thought of Song *daoxue* 道學 philosophers, tallying well with Zhu Xi’s pedagogical program.<sup>61</sup>

Hermeneutically, the concern with the inner mind (*zhongxin* 中心) shows a turn towards the general and universally human. Leaving any specific interpretation behind, it corresponds to the above-noted couplets from “Shi jiu,” the most-cited of all *Odes* lines in Warring States and early imperial texts. In quoting an *Ode*, such exegesis suggests, one couldn’t go very wrong under almost any circumstance. Certainly, the biting satire in *Zhuangzi* 莊子—with Ru scholars robbing a tomb and violating the corps while chanting an appropriate (fictitious) *Ode*—drives home in graphic detail this very point (Guo Qingfan 1985: 927–28). Perhaps more important than the wording of any particular line was the fact that one quoted from the *Odes* at all, invoking their venerated authority of old, coded, and ritualized speech. The widespread practice of quoting lines, couplets, and stanzas from the *Odes* entirely out of context—known as *duan zhang qu yi* 斷章取義 (“cutting out a paragraph to retrieve meaning”)—bespeaks a hermeneutical approach

<sup>61</sup> Van Zoeren 1991: 218–49 gives an excellent discussion of Zhu Xi’s *Odes* interpretation as part of Zhu’s overall philosophy.

that paid little attention to any inherent, stable, and objective “meaning” of a song as a whole, and in itself. Meaning was in fact not “retrieved” (*qu* 取) but generated, and not merely from the lyrics but from the ever-changing performative contexts of their application and reception. It was hence their hermeneutic openness that marked the *Odes* as *the* fundamentally human and hence universal literary collection—“the classic of the human heart and the human mind” (Owen 1996: xv)—and that distinguished them from every other ancient Chinese text. Whatever their original circumstances of composition, they weighed lightly, compared to the significance of the situation to which an *Odes* quotation was deemed fit, and to the ritualized performance of quoting a song as a proof text.

Much of this performative and situative dimension of meaning was lost in the Western Han exegetical mood of interpretation qua historical contextualization. The Mao recension in particular, but to some extent also the *san jia* interpretations (as, e.g., in the case of “Guan ju”), shifted the focus of “retrieving meaning” from the reception to the production of the *Odes*. In an attempt to arrest the significance of almost every song, no less than three different aspects of it were now defined, in a way as arbitrary as apodictic, to reach a comprehensive historical interpretation: (a) its circumstances of composition, (b) its original addressee, and (c) its—however nebulous—author.<sup>62</sup> It is worthwhile pausing for a moment to consider that all this information is missing not only in the individual *Odes* proper but also in the large majority of their pre-imperial quotations and interpretations—including the Guodian and Shanghai Museum texts—and still even in early Western manuscripts as well as in the *Han Shi waixhuan*.

### Conclusions

In the preceding sections, I have briefly discussed the *Odes* variants in excavated manuscripts, the early teaching and transmission of canonical texts, and the changes of early *Odes* exegesis. There is a conspicuous synchronicity in the development of these issues: the strictly historical interpretation and contextualization of

<sup>62</sup> O Man-jong 2001: 95–97, gives examples of *Odes* that are assigned to different authors in different early texts. For his extensive discussion of the historization of the *Odes* in the Mao recension, see pp. 88–117.

each and every song from the *Odes* culminated in the Mao recension, which happens to be also the text that in its glosses on individual graphs and words betrays a hitherto unknown emphasis on orthography and thus indicates a move towards the fixation and standardization of the written text—a text no longer to be primarily performed on ritual occasions but to be studied by scholars. In other words, the exegetical fixation of an unambiguous textual meaning, generated through the purported reconstruction of a song’s original circumstances of composition, developed parallel to the standardization of the written textual form over the course of the early empire. These are the two sides of what Van Zoeren (1991: 25, 50) has called the emergence of the “strong text” of the *Odes*. Such a “strong text” became both physical and portable—a canon to be studied in writing. The status of this canon was cemented by the production of written commentaries that began circulating among the imperially appointed scholarly elite; as in other cultures (Henderson 1991, Assmann 1992; Assmann and Assmann 1987), such written commentaries not only appropriated the authority of explaining the canon; they indeed contributed to defining the canon as an object of study and veneration that was distanced from, and elevated above, daily affairs.

At a time when earlier performative practices of the *Odes*—e.g., the travel diplomacy so ubiquitous in *Zuozhuan*—had vanished, when officially appointed erudites (*boshi* 博士) at the Qin and Western Han imperial courts were in charge of studying and teaching the canonical works, when books and teachings were collected and catalogued as well as destroyed and censored on imperial command, and when the imperial academy and library became the centers for the education and selection of the bureaucratic elite, the written form of the traditional canon must have been invested with a hitherto unknown significance. As noted above, it was Liu Xin who first proposed that written texts were superior to those from oral transmissions. He made his argument in the context of the canonization of the *Zuozhuan*, which under Emperor Ping 平 (r. 1 BCE–6 CE) went in tandem with that of the *Mao Shi*. More than any other text, it was now the *Zuozhuan* that provided the very history of events through which the Mao recension reconstructed the composition-centered history of the *Odes*, and quite ironically so: it is the same *Zuozhuan* that has always provided our best evidence for the reception-oriented, non-historizing interpretation qua application of the *Odes* in Spring and Autumn times.

With several recensions of texts often concurrently officially sponsored, there was no narrowly defined state orthodoxy imposed on the canons in Western Han times (Nylan 1994, 1999), and we should perhaps lay aside the traditional image of the Emperor Wu reign (141–87 BCE) as the period when the five canons became the backbone of state orthodoxy and imperial representation, not to mention that their imperial scholarship marked the “victory of Confucianism” (Kern 2001: 67–74). Obviously, the four known Western Han recensions differed at least to some extent in both their texts and their interpretations, and they were tolerated as such well into Eastern Han times. At the same time, however, the impulse to establish reliable versions of texts is well-documented in Han historical sources, e.g., with Liu Xiang’s 劉向 (79–8 BCE) activities as chief collator in the imperial library under Emperor Cheng 成 (r. 33–7 BCE) who in 26 BCE gave order to collect the books from all over the empire in the palace library where they were carefully edited (Ban Gu 1987: 10.310, 30.1701; van der Loon 1952: 358–66). The increasingly important role of written texts in late Western Han imperial culture drastically reduced the space for substantial textual variants that potentially could undermine not just the “meaning” of a given text but the principles of textual learning and preservation altogether.

In this context, and despite the relative ideological tolerance that is apparent from several coexisting officially sponsored versions of a canon, the “strong text” was also the controllable text. By privileging a limited group of such interpretations—like the four Western Han *Odes* recensions—at the expense of all others and setting them into writing, the scholars in imperial service effectively limited the range of possible further interpretation. (The success of this Han enterprise is all too obvious from the fact that it took more than a millennium—until the Song dynasty—before the Han readings of the *Odes* were finally challenged, though still not finally abandoned.) The emergence of written commentaries, adopted, sponsored, and protected by the state, went elegantly together with the imperial desire for controlling and monopolizing the interpretation of canonical texts in general, and of the *Odes* in particular. This desire we can identify behind both the suppression of *Odes* interpretations<sup>63</sup> outside of the imperial court under the Qin First

<sup>63</sup> It should by now be clear that I (a) do not subscribe to the idea that the Qin tried to erase the *Odes* as such and (b) believe that the oppressive measures of 213 BCE were aimed not at the text of

Emperor in 213 BCE and the appointment of imperial erudites in 136 BCE under Emperor Wu 武. Contrary to common perception (e.g., Kramers 1986), Han (and, for that matter, probably also Qin) imperial sponsorship of written texts was a means not merely to elevate but also to control the Ru ideology and its core texts (Kern 2000a: 183–96).

In its quest for tradition and historical precedent, Han imperial culture was deeply occupied with the past. With the meaning of history sought and explained as immanent in history itself, i.e., without reference to some ultimate metaphysical truth, a thorough historical explanation of the *Odes* was perhaps the most logical choice. As this interpretation had to largely abandon the former openness and semantic multivalence of the *Odes* in order to constitute a historically specific meaning, resolving textual problems, as well as limiting the exegetical range, must have been perceived as a prerequisite. According to the analysis above, in earlier times, when the exchange of the *Odes* was dominated by oral performances, such problems might not have been recognized at all—different audiences may have occasionally understood different words behind the same sound, depending on the teacher and performative context. Neither graphically nor hermeneutically, the plethora of versions was under control; and none of the early *Odes* versions was more or less authentic than any other.

It was the imperial bureaucratic control over the *Odes* that needed definite versions with definite meanings; both written form and poetic meaning were now seen to reside in an idealized “original” text of old. This transformation of the *Odes* from hermeneutically open performance texts into self-contained readings of fixed meaning independent from particular situational circumstances reveals a fundamental shift in early Chinese cultural history.<sup>64</sup> Before, citations from the *Odes* as exemplary expressions of truth and accomplishment could be seamlessly

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the *Odes* as such (which, as argued above, did not circulate on its own) but primarily at their interpretations. Note that Li Si 李斯 (d. 208 BCE), when suggesting to the emperor to collect and destroy the *Odes* and other texts outside of the imperial court (Sima Qian 6.255, 87.2546–47), warned not of the danger of these texts proper, but of their application towards “using the past to denigrate the present” (*yi gu fei jin* 以古非今).

<sup>64</sup> This shift, of course, was a larger development extending far beyond the *Odes*, for the broader picture, see Kern 2001.

integrated into a wide range of contemporary situations. In Han historical exegesis, by contrast, the *Odes* were perceived as reflections about, or indeed documents of, specific historical situations that could and should be retrospectively identified. Earlier, one used words *from* the past to speak directly to the present; now, one let these words speak *about* the past. Earlier, the past had remained spoken, fluid, and present, like ancestors who continued to be involved in the affairs of the living; now, the past was written, arrested, and past, and significant for the present only through analogical and historical thinking. With the collapse of the pre-imperial social, moral, and ritual order and its replacement by the bureaucratic state with its needs for unification and standardization, the gap was real between past and present. The old performances and patterns of expression were gone. Slowly but steadily, the written texts and their scholarly commentaries moved into their space.

In more than one sense, the *Odes* in our manuscripts shimmer with the beauty of relics from the older times. Their unstable graphical representation exhibits the primacy of the spoken word. Their embedded quotations exploit them as proof texts. Their interpretations are reception-centered and imply the role of the teacher. And in the context of the tombs, their expensive material (in Mawangdui) and beautiful calligraphy (in Guodian and the Shanghai Museum) show them as ritual commodities whose value was not merely textual but representational. Their performance may have become silent, but it was still a performance.

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## Résumé 摘要

## 從近來出土的資料考察中國早期詩學

教科書裏有關中國詩學起源的描寫，使我們習慣於接受少數的關鍵性文章：像《孟子》、《左傳》、《論語》的一些短篇章，還有《詩大序》及《樂記》。《毛詩》已經揭示了早期詩歌寓意，從西漢晚期以來的經儒不斷將他們自己的道德和政治態度加在解讀上。這篇論文要超越傳統文獻的範圍，並從近來出土的文獻，討論早期詩文的不同接收與解讀。我們不僅可以發現對個別詩篇的不同解釋，同時也借此再斟酌我們對這些早期詩的構成、流傳、解讀和社會文化地位的基本假定，特別是其中文本差異問題，使我們可以去探討最早的詩的流傳方式。

## Liu Xiang's Attitude towards Fiction

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One of the most striking differences between ancient Chinese and ancient Western literatures is the absence of fiction, literature of imagination, in China and its omnipresence in the West. *Gilgamesh* in the ancient Near East and the *Iliad* in Greece are the first works of fiction to spring to mind in the West, but one is at pains to find similar imaginative works in ancient China. The earliest literature in China seems almost devoid of fiction. The short poems of the "Canonical Book of Poetry," the *Shijing* 詩經, are mostly folk songs or ritual hymns and the earliest prose works are almost all historical or philosophical in theme with rare elements that could only be seen at best as some kind of proto-fiction whose main aim is certainly not imaginative literature. Major works of fiction appear only very late, in the Song dynasty, something like two thousand years after literature first appears around the end of the second millennium B.C., and even then it remains a very popular genre of oral literature, looked down upon by the literati with few exceptions until the twentieth century, when it finally obtained something like universal acceptance.

In the twenty minutes that are allotted to me today I would like to focus my attention on the earliest descriptions of the term used for fiction to see what they can tell us about the attitude of the Chinese to that form of imaginative literature, in particular I would like to study the short paragraph devoted to fiction in the



# Recarving the Dragon

Understanding Chinese Poetics

Edited by Olga Lomová

Prague 2003  
Charles University in Prague  
The Karolinum Press